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Written on SEPTEMBER 22, 2014 AT 6:00 AM by SVANDERWERFF

What's with all the Questions?

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(NO COMMENTS)

Dr. Eileen Delaney, assistant department head of research facilitation, Naval Center for Combat & Operational Stress Control



Many surveys and assessments aim to collect psychological health information in specific areas and each has a particular goal.

It might seem like anything you do these days triggers some type of survey or questionnaire. Going on deployment? Here's a survey. Have a new doctor? Answer this questionnaire, please. Seeing a mental health provider? Well, you get the idea.

And, it might seem like these surveys are all the same: asking about your mood, what kind of stress you are under, how often you drink alcohol. You might be wondering what's with all the questions? Is there actually a point to answering a seemingly never-ending slew of questions?

Actually, there is a point and it's pretty important (and it's not to conquer the human spirit by seeing how many questions a person can answer before going numb). Many surveys and assessments aim to collect psychological health information in specific areas

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Surveys can be used to get a snapshot of how you are feeling or doing either at work or home.

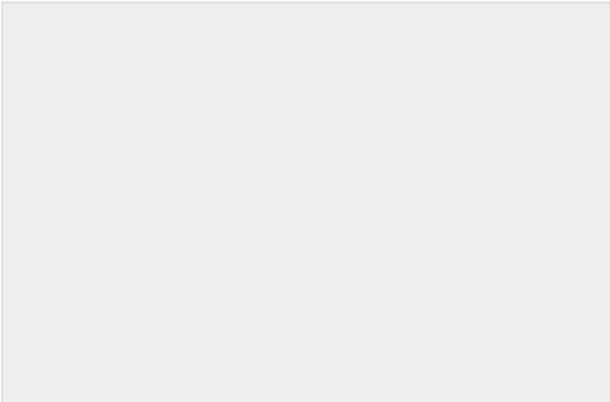
and each has a particular goal. The end result can be used to determine how mentally fit you are prior to deployment so that you can safely accomplish the mission or to gauge your psychological health status after deployment to ensure you receive appropriate care and treatment, if needed, because the Navy and Marine Corps team takes care of their own.

Why use surveys?

One question you might have is why fill out a survey or questionnaire (also called an assessment) instead of talking with someone face-to-face? One reason is that surveys can collect a lot of information in a small amount of time. Think of it like this. If you had an auditorium full of hundreds of people, it would be much more efficient to get up in front, ask a question once and have everyone respond rather than putting them in a single file line to ask the same question one by one. Another reason is that by having surveys filled out in advance, it gives providers an opportunity to have some background information before the appointment to make the most of that face time. It is also a way of asking different people questions in the same way so answers can be summarized and compared.

Of course, there are some disadvantages to using surveys. Talking with someone one-on-one allows you to explain why your situation is unique to you. But, in many cases, completing a survey may be a first step before talking with someone directly. Another disadvantage is that surveys take the risk that you might answer questions without fully reading them, which makes answers invalid because they don't reflect how you really think or feel. Yet, survey developers and administrators believe that most people will take the time to read each question and answer honestly. This makes surveyors a group of optimists, seeing the glass half-full as opposed to half-empty, or rather, seeing the survey as half-completed as opposed to half-unfinished. The important thing is to read the questions all the way through before answering as honestly and accurately as possible.

What are the goals of surveys?



Surveys can be used to get a snapshot of how you are feeling or doing either at work or home. They can also be used to track changes over time. One example is the Post-Deployment Health Assessment and Reassessment (PDHA/PDHRA), which all Sailors and Marines take 30

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Surveys are not only used to gauge individuals, they are often used to measure the impact of a current program or training. B(U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Maria Rachel D. Melchor)

days after returning from deployment and then again 3 months later. These questionnaires ask about any potential stress symptoms, negative moods, or patterns of alcohol use that could be affecting you. These

questions are asked at several different times because these problems can come up at different times.

You may complete similar types of surveys when you are getting medical or mental health treatment, for such things as a concussion, anger, anxiety, or sleep. Here, they are used to determine if problems you are experiencing are improving or if treatment needs to be changed. You can think of it like having your temperature taken when you aren't feeling well – it's a way of gauging whether or not you are getting better.

Surveys don't always just focus on problems (remember, surveyors are optimists). They also often ask about positive things: how satisfied you are with your life or the helpful ways you deal with stress. Surveys collect information about people's strengths so that more can be learned about how to be resilient and live a healthier life. The more we learn about these characteristics, the more this knowledge can be shared and taught across large groups of people.

Also, surveys are not only used to gauge individuals, they are often used to measure the impact of a current program or training. By giving out surveys to those who have completed a program or training, trainers can decide if it's working or if the content needs to be changed, updated, or improved. Tired of being Power Pointed to death? Don't just complain about it to your shipmates; that post-training survey just might be your chance to make it better. So speak up, answer honestly, and provide suggestions.

What is your role in surveys?

The most important thing to know about surveys and questionnaires is that they are made to help. Whether they're used to identify psychological injuries or illnesses or just improve the quality of a specific training, the information collected by surveys is designed to help on various levels.



Survey developers will often go into painstaking detail of how to ask each question in the best way.(U.S. Navy photo by Chief

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Developing surveys can take weeks, months, or even years. Survey

Mass Communication Specialist Ryan G. Wilber)

developers will often go into painstaking detail of how to ask each question in the best way. But, even the most thought-out, well-planned survey can’t identify every problem. That’s why it really takes a combined effort between those making surveys and those completing surveys to make them live up to their potential. The more you take the time to read each question and answer it honestly, the more benefits the survey will have for you (receiving the right treatment or best training), your provider (gaining better insight to help you) and even your shipmates (receiving knowledge about being more resilient).

SIDEBAR

Most service members are familiar with is the Pre-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA). The PDHA assesses your fitness to deploy and sets a baseline health status for you prior to deployment. Other assessment tools used by military providers include:

- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) – screens for depression symptoms, anxiety and among other concerns
- PTSD Checklist (PCL) – assesses trauma-related stress
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD) – assesses various signs of generalized anxiety disorder
- Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) – measures your satisfaction with life as a whole
- Unit Cohesion/Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory (DRRI) – assesses extent to which service members feel supported by other service members in their unit and their leaders
- Life Orientation Test (LOT) – measures amount of optimism one has based on expectations for positive outcomes as opposed to negative outcomes

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